The early season story of the Eastern Conference, the Washington Capitals have focused on the existential qualities of Alexander Ovechkin’s superstar and whether or not it has faded to mere star status. Questions have been thrown all over print and online media as to whether Ovechkin can steer the Capitals’ franchise back on the course it was heading on. The struggles of the Neuvirth/Holtby duo have too been well documented (see www.goaliepost.com for the latest day winner of this to day battle), as well as the fading out of Mike Green to boot.

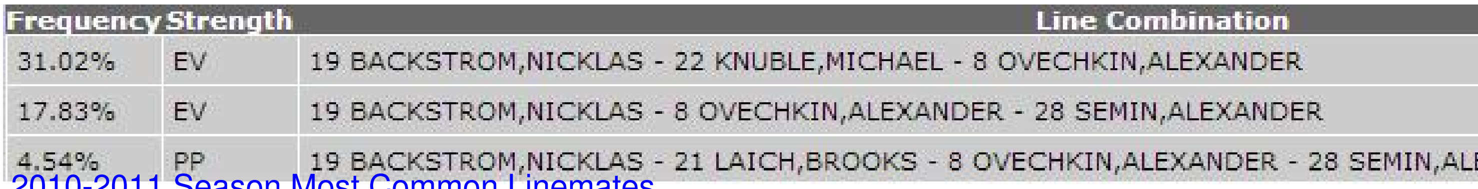
Eric Fehr went as far as to outright state that this is now an aging team . A bit of an overstatement considering its stars are still all in their twenty-somethings, most likely yes. But nonetheless, it certainly appears to be a squad that has become stagnant.

However, very little focus has been directed to the club’s top line centreman Nicklas Backstrom, the former 100 point man and set-up king for Ovechkin. Since his 101 point 2009-10 season, Nicklas has seen his points per game total go on a wild rollercoaster ride from 1.23 PPG, to a massive drop off at .84 PPG in 2010-11, followed by a nice bounce back last season at 1.05 PPG. This leads us to today’s career low .73 PPG rate of play, well below the 25-year-old’s high-end capabilities.

Let’s take a quick look at Frozen Pool’s Most Frequent line combinations output generator , to see if any hypotheses can be derived…

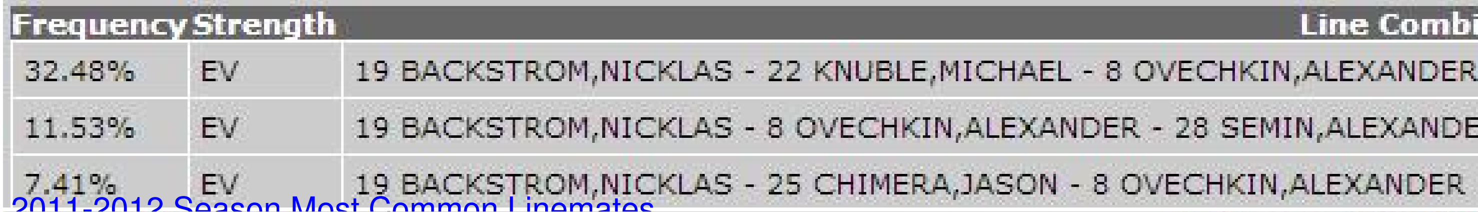
Beginning with the apex of this of this Capitals era, the 2009-10 regular season until today, these are Backstrom’s most paired up linemates. See a common theme building Mr. Oates?

2009-2010 Season Most Common Linemates



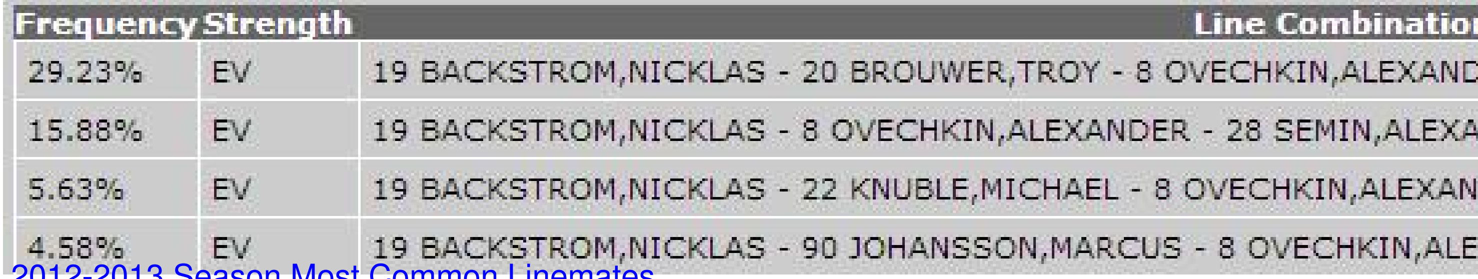
Frequency	Strength	Line Combination
31.02%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 22 KNUBLE,MICHAEL - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER
17.83%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER - 28 SEMIN,ALEXANDER
4.54%	PP	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 21 LAICH,BROOKS - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER - 28 SEMIN,AL

2010-2011 Season Most Common Linemates



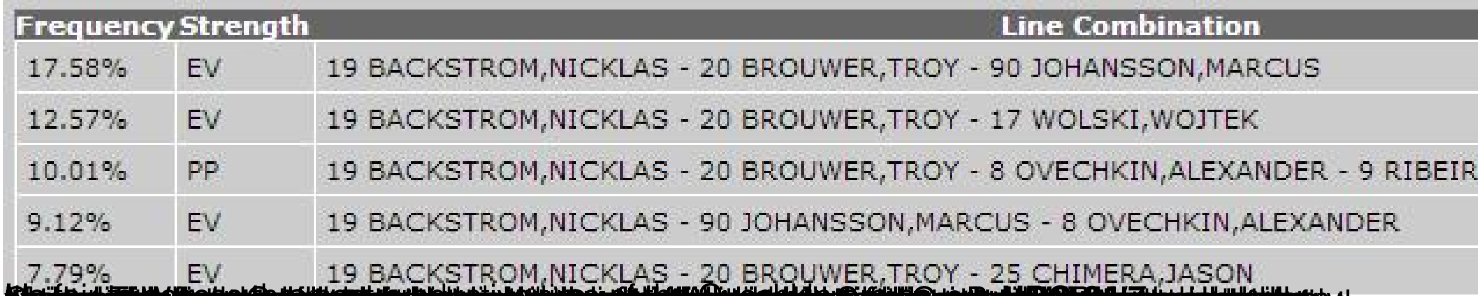
Frequency	Strength	Line Combi
32.48%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 22 KNUBLE,MICHAEL - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER
11.53%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER - 28 SEMIN,ALEXANDE
7.41%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 25 CHIMERA,JASON - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER

2011-2012 Season Most Common Linemates



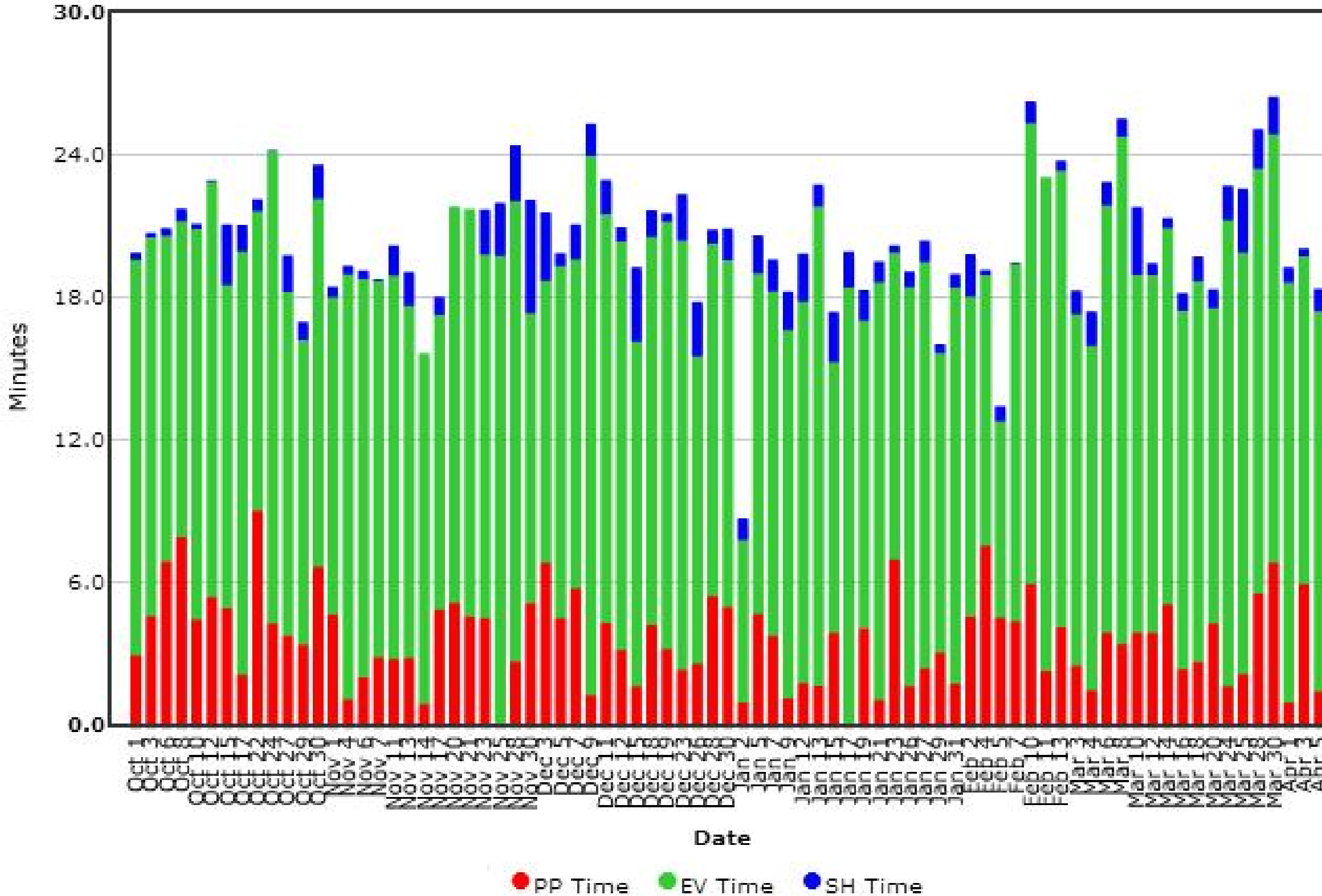
Frequency	Strength	Line Combinatio
29.23%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 20 BROUWER,TROY - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXAND
15.88%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER - 28 SEMIN,ALEXA
5.63%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 22 KNUBLE,MICHAEL - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXAN
4.58%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 90 JOHANSSON,MARCUS - 8 OVECHKIN,ALE

2012-2013 Season Most Common Linemates



Frequency	Strength	Line Combination
17.58%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 20 BROUWER,TROY - 90 JOHANSSON,MARCUS
12.57%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 20 BROUWER,TROY - 17 WOLSKI,WOJTEK
10.01%	PP	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 20 BROUWER,TROY - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER - 9 RIBEIR
9.12%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 90 JOHANSSON,MARCUS - 8 OVECHKIN,ALEXANDER
7.79%	EV	19 BACKSTROM,NICKLAS - 20 BROUWER,TROY - 25 CHIMERA,JASON

[illegible] Player Graph Generator [illegible] FP's [illegible]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24.0
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Minutes
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PP Time
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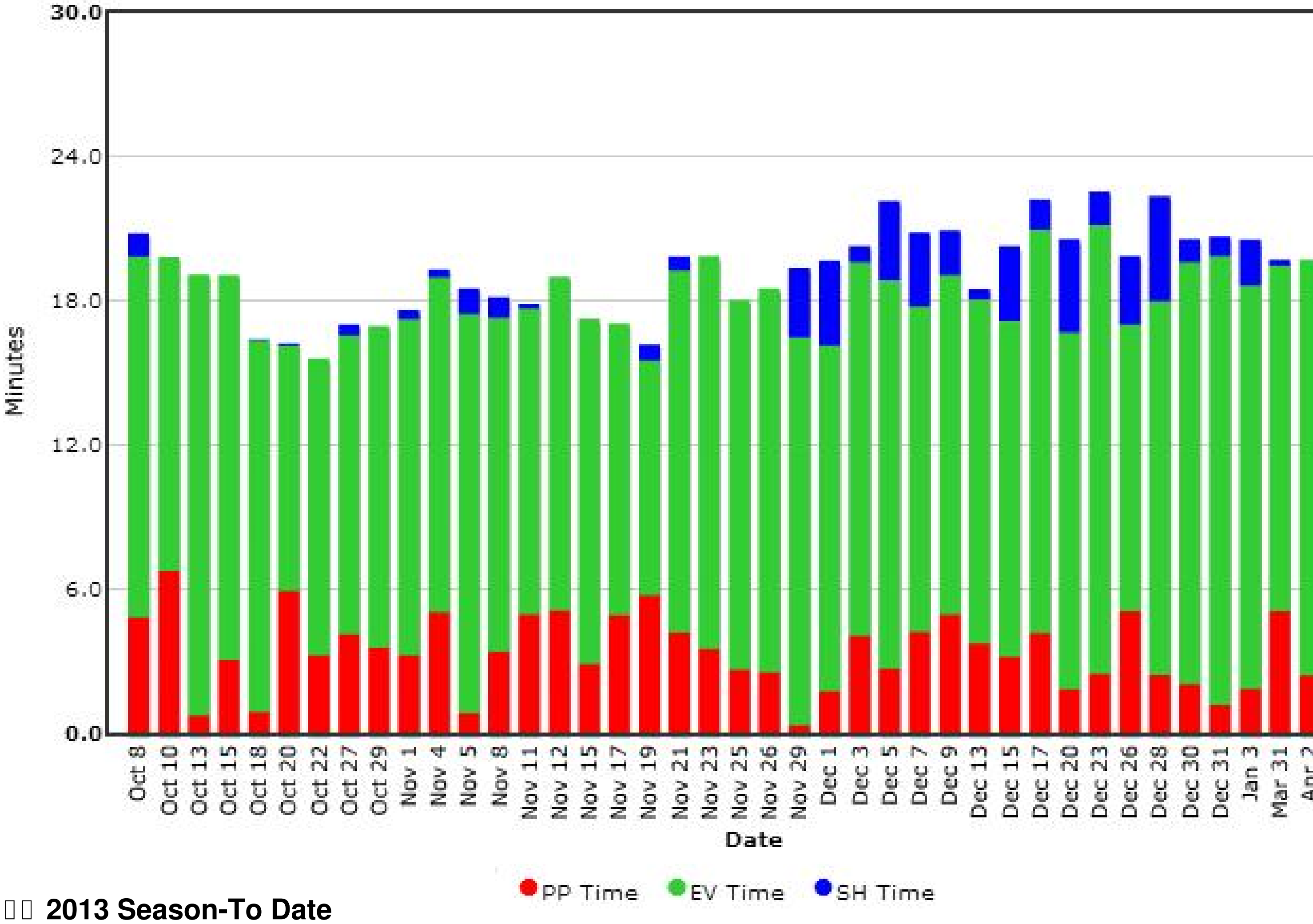
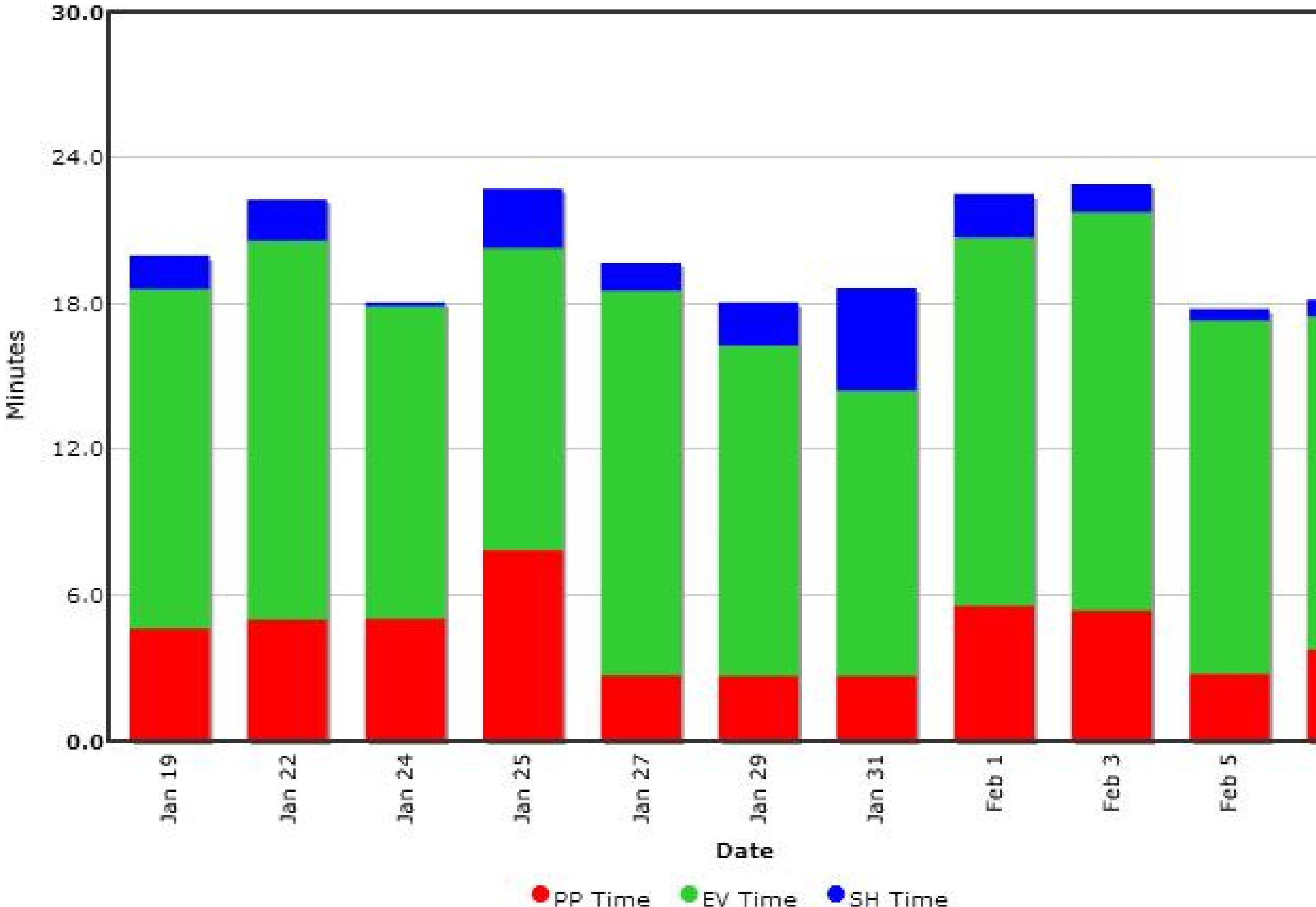


2013 Season-To Date



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(Give Anthony Lancione a follow on Twitter @Anthisdaman)